

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 AID-05 FDRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 TRSE-00 HEW-04 MED-02 IO-13

EB-07 IGA-02 /091 W

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P R 131651Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1762

INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 7433

FOR STATE AND AID/W

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAID, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANON DISASTER RELIEF: SENATE APPROVAL FOR HOSPITAL
SHIP

1. LOCAL PRESS SEP 11 REPORTS SENATE APPROVAL OF \$35 MILLION
AID AND RECONSTRUCTION GRANT FOR LEBANON, INCLUDING \$10
MILLION FOR OUTFITTING AND OPERATION OF HOSPITAL SHIP IN
LEBANESE WATERS.

2. THIS EMBASSY IS NATURALLY INTERESTED IN STATUS OF THIS
PROJECT, PARTICULARLY PROPOSED HOSPITAL SHIP OPERATIONS, AND
WOULD APPRECIATE ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION DEPT CAN PROVIDE.

3. IN OUR VIEW, THE OUTFITTING OF A HOSPITAL SHIP AND DISPATCH
TO PROVIDE MEANINGFUL HEALTH CARE ASSISTANCE TO LEBANON.
IT WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY TAKE MONTHS TO PREPARE SUCH A SHIP
WHEREAS THE NEED IS IMMEDIATE. THE SHORTAGE IN LEBANON IS
NOT OF HOSPITAL BEDS BUT OF DOCTORS, NURSES AND BASIC
MEDICAL SUPPLIES. (WE UNDERSTAND 18 SMALL GOVERNMENT
HOSPITALS ARE CLOSED FOR LACK OF DOCTORS.) IF HOSPITAL
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SHIP ACCEPTS PATIENTS FROM BOTH SIDES, THERE WOULD BE

CONSTANT DANGER OF FEUDING AND PERHAPS ACTUAL COMBAT AMONG VISITORS, IF THEY WERE ALLOWED ON BOARD. IF SHIP SERVED ONLY RIGHTIST-HELD AREAS ON GROUNDS THAT AUH IS SERVING LEFTISTS, IT WOULD TEND TO OBSCURE AUH'S SERVICE TO ALL SECTORS OF WEST BEIRUT SOCIETY AND RAISE A STORM OF PROTEST NOT ONLY IN LEFTIST-HELD LEBANON BUT POSSIBLY ELSEWHERE IN THE ARAB WORLD. IN ANY CASE, TRANSPORTATION OF PATIENTS (AND VISITORS) TO AND FROM THE SHIP WOULD BE A CONSTANT PROBLEM.

4. WE BELIEVE THESE FUNDS COULD BE MUCH BETTER SPENT IN SUPPORT OF HOSPITALS ALREADY OPERATING IN LEBANON, TO HELP THEM TO REBUILD AND RE-EQUIP. ALMOST EVERY HOSPITAL IN LEBANON HAS BEEN DAMAGED BY SHELL AND MORTAR FIRE AND \$10 MILLION WOULD GO A LONG WAY TOWARDS REHABILITATING THEM. THIS WOULD BE A LASTING GIFT TO THE LEBANESE PEOPLE IN ALL PARTS OF THE COUNTRY -- NOT ONE THAT WOULD SAIL AWAY IN A FEW WEEKS OR MONTHS. IN ADDITION, SOME FUNDS MIGHT BE USED TO PROVIDE SPECIALISTS IN SUCH FIELDS AS PHYSIO-THERAPY, PROSTHETICS AND ORTHOTICS, PRESENTLY NON-EXISTENT IN LEBANON.

5. EMBASSY RECOMMENDS DEPT AND AID DISCUSS THESE SUGGESTIONS WITH SENATOR ABOUREZK AND DR. HOWARD MANSOUR, WHO WE UNDERSTAND FROM DR. ASPER OF AUH IS MOVING SPIRIT BEHIND HOSPITAL SHIP IDEA, AND SEEK THEIR SUPPORT FOR REPLACEMENT OF HOSPITAL SHIP WITH MORE FLEXIBLE AND IMMEDIATE PROGRAM FOR PROVIDING HEALTH CARE ASSISTANCE TO LEBANON. (MANSOUR'S ADDRESS IS: MANSOUR MEDICAL CENTER, 70 LINCOLN WAY EAST, JEANNETTE, PA. 15644, TEL 412-527-1511.)
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